

BOYS AND GIRLS

Look Up.

Be like the Sun that pours its ray
To gladden and glorify the day.
Be like the Moon that sheds its light
To bless and beautify the night.
Be like the Stars that sparkle on,
Although the Sun and Moon be gone.
Be like the Skies that steadfast are.
Though absent Sun and Moon and Star.
—Selected.

The Bridge Keeper.

(Frank H. Sweet, in 'Forward.')

'No, we have no work for you. We're only taking on fresh young blood. I'm sorry, but you're too old,' and with a half glance toward the white hair of the applicant, the speaker swung his chair back to the desk from which he had turned at the man's entrance.

'Do you know of any place where I might find a job?' the man asked, hesitatingly.

'No,' curtly; 'our company controls about everything on both banks of the river. Still, there's a few cheap concerns on the other side where you might find a temporary job. What's your line?'

'Nothin', only to do odd jobs, sir. I've been on the sea most o' my life, an' never learned any trade except sailarin'. But I'm handy.'

'So they all say. Well, you can try over there, though, frankly, I do not think you stand much chance.'

'No,' gravely, 'there don't seem much chance anywhere. I was on the other side before I came here, an' they said I was too old. Everything seems to hinge on one company, an' they want only young men an' boys. I tried to tell 'em I'm not quite so old as my hair shows for, an' that I was ready to put myself up against as hard work as the strongest man they hired did; but no, 'twan't no use, they didn't want me. I've been off the sea sixty days, now, an' ain't found a chance yet. I'd like to stay on shore the balance o' my life, though, a little wistfully, 'on account o' my granddaughter. There ain't only she an' me. But it don't seem as if I can. I guess I'll have to go back to the water.'

'I guess you will,' abstractedly. 'That seems your line.'

The old man left the office and walked slowly down to the long bridge that spanned the river. He had come across on the train, after stopping a day on the other side, for his ticket had read to this point, and he had saved the bridge coupon. Now he would have to walk back over the bridge and on to his seaport home, twenty miles across the country to the coast. He had taken only money enough to pay for the ticket, leaving the rest of their small hoard with his granddaughter, for he had confidently expected to find a job in one of these busy towns, and be able to send for her to join him. There was nothing left but to go back and remain with her a few days, and then seek a berth on some vessel.

But as he approached the centre of the bridge he suddenly paused. There was a bar across and a turngate, and he understood what that meant. Before he could pass he would have to pay toll, and he did not have a cent. Beyond the gate and leaning against it was a boy of seventeen or eighteen, with his eyes fixed eagerly on a gesticulating crowd in an open field on the opposite shore. Evidently a ball game was in progress there, and the youthful bridge tender was very much excited over it, for often his hands rose into the air, and sometimes his hat, and once his voice echoed an enthusiastic cheer which came across the water.

The old man hesitated, and then went to one of the bridge benches, very close to the gate. He had a right to come this far, and he would stay until night. Perhaps the bridge would not have a tender then, and he could pass; if it did, he would try to slip by. He had never tried to evade any obligation before, but he must cross the bridge and reach home as soon as possible.

Meanwhile, the bridge tender was becoming more and more excited, and several times he started forward, as though half inclined to forsake his post. Suddenly he noticed the old man sitting at the gate.

'Hello,' he called, eagerly, 'going to stay here long?'

'Why, yes, quite a while, I think.'

'Then you look out for my place a few minutes. I'll be awfully obliged,' and without waiting for consent or comment, the boy sped away toward the farther shore and the yelling crowd.

'Wait! Hold on a minute!' called the old man after him; but the boy did not hear. His head was down, with his arms pressed closely to his sides; he was sprinting and oblivious of everything he was leaving behind. The old man went through the gate, his face anxious and perturbed.

'Whatever's to be done, I wonder?' he muttered aloud. 'I don't know the toll, and—good land!' as he noticed water through a narrow open space in the bridge, and extending entirely across from side to side; 'if it ain't a draw. How'd they open it? I hope no boat'll come till the boy gets back. He's crazy.'

But he did not even think of deserting the post. That would not have been the man's nature. Keenly the eyes under the shaggy brows swept about in search of the means of opening the draw in case of necessity; then a bicycle came swiftly across the bridge, and he turned to the gate.

'Good-morning; a new man, I see,' exclaimed the bicyclist, as he passed through, and the old man felt a nickel slipped into his hand. That settled one problem. The toll was five cents. Then his gaze went back in search of the key to the bridge opening.

But he was a 'handy man,' who had lived on shipboard most of his life, and was accustomed to windlasses and screws and various means of shifting heavy weights. Soon the keen eyes discovered what they were after, and none too soon, for almost at the very moment came a vigorous, 'Ahoy, draw!' from up the river. A schooner was sweeping straight down upon him, under a full head of canvas. But though he had found the means, his hands lacked the dexterity of experience, and they fumbled with hurried unfamiliarity until there came a second hail, this time sharp and impatient. Then the bridge swung open and the boat shot through.

'Thank you, keeper,' came a relieved voice

from below. 'I was afraid you didn't see me, and I was on the point of tacking off to avoid smashing things. But I see you know your business.'

The old man's face grew more tranquil. There were no people in sight on the bridge now, and no boats very near. He opened and shut the draw several times, allowing it to swing a few yards either way, until he felt that he had it under control; then he went to the tiny building which was the bridge-tender's home and office, and found a broom. With this he went vigorously to work clearing away the litter that the boy's neglect had allowed to accumulate.

Two hours went by and in that time four boats had gone through, and perhaps fifty people passed over the bridge; and at the end of that time the draw and gate and benches were as clean and neat as broom and brush could make them.

There were no signs of the boy, but the old man had scarcely given him a thought. He was at work now, and at just such work as was peculiarly congenial. The anxiety for the time being was gone from his eyes, and he went about the self-sought duties with cheery little snatches of sea songs breaking occasionally from his lips. Only once did he pause suddenly, in the midst of a breezy refrain, and that was when he glanced into the tiny house and realized what a cozy home it would make for himself and his granddaughter.

The breeze was now freshening, and there were several boats coming down the river together and under full sail. He was in the very act of turning the draw when a carriage dashed upon the bridge, with another scarcely twenty yards behind, and both evidently in a great hurry. The first would reach him considerably in advance of the first boat, with ample time to open the draw, so he waited, though he could hear the sharp 'Ahoy!' of the boatmen.

It was now that his experience of winds and tides stood him in good stead. A swift glance, and he could have told to almost a second when the boats would reach the draw. He waited until the first carriage had swept across, and then, with a warning call to the other coachman, swung the draw open to the leading boat, which was less than twenty yards away. After they had passed through he shut the draw for the second carriage.

The coachman was red and angry. 'Look here, you bridge man,' he cried, 'what'd you shut us back for? We're in a big hurry, an' could 'a' got through in another minute, an' there was plenty o' time. D'ye know who I'm carryin'?''

'James! James!' came a stern voice from the carriage; 'that is enough. The man did just right. I was watching. It was as fine a bit of calculation as I ever saw.' Then, as the carriage came opposite the old man, 'Let me—but hello! where is the regular keeper?'

'Why, sir, I—think he's gone over to the ball game for just a few minutes,' hesitated the old man.

'And left you to fill his place?'

'Yes, sir.'

'You are an experienced bridge keeper, I see.'

'N-no, sir. I never tried the work before this.'

'U'm! Then you are quick to pick it up. The young man showed you about it, I suppose?'

'No, he—he was in quite a good deal of hurry, an' just asked me to look out for the work. But I'm handy about pickin' up things. I've been on board ship most o' my life, sir.'

'Oh, a sailor. That accounts for your judging of the boats' speed. You're a friend, or perhaps relative, of the young man?'

'No, I'm a stranger to everybody here. I've been lookin' for work, but couldn't find any. I was just—sittin' down here a while when the boy spoke to me.'

'U'm! a stranger, and he asked you to look out for his job, and did not wait to tell you what to do. You said for just a few minutes, I believe. Can you tell me exactly how long he has been gone?'

The old man hesitated. 'Well, ye see, sir,' he apologized, 'there was a ball game, an' ye know how boys are about such things. Ye mustn't be hard on him. I've done the best I could, an' don't think anything's gone amiss. The money's

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